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Volume 4

Issue 4

October 1977

*The Beginnings of the Arabic Diglossia.
A Study of the Origins of Neoarabic*

by

Joshua Blau



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VOLUME FOUR

MARCH 1977 – OCTOBER 1977



Undena Publications

Malibu

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**THE BEGINNINGS OF THE ARABIC DIGLOSSIA.
A STUDY OF THE ORIGINS OF NEOARABIC**

by

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The Central Arabic dialects partaking in the *ʿarabiyya*, were of Old Arabic type, perhaps also Nabatean Arabic. Nothing can be inferred for the emergence of Neoarabic from the redundancy of the Old Arabic case system, since redundancy of cases is a general feature. Arabic diglossia arose as late as the first Islamic century in the towns of the Arabic empire, to a great extent as a result of the great Arab conquests, without the intermediary of any *koine*. There arose no common Bedouin language in the military camps to constitute the basis of Islamic early Standard Arabic, either.

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1. THE ARABIC DIGLOSSIA

As well known, the Arabic linguistic situation is characterized by DIGLOSSIA: Standard Arabic¹ is used for literary and other cultural purposes, the Neoarabic dialects for everyday communication.² In the following, we shall endeavor to study the emergence of this diglossia. Therefore, we shall, in the main, be interested in the origins of Neoarabic only as far as it came into being side by side with Standard Arabic, thus giving rise to diglossia.

2. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN OLD ARABIC AND NEOARABIC

Despite the affinity between Standard Arabic exhibiting the Old Arabic language type and the Neoarabic dialects, the differences between these two linguistic types are quite conspicuous. Whereas Standard Arabic has preserved the inventory of the Proto-Semitic consonants almost intact, only *ṣ* wanting, it has been reduced in Neoarabic. In almost all the Neoarabic dialects

¹I am not using the term Classical Arabic, because its modern variety is called Modern Standard Arabic, rather than Modern Classical Arabic. Another term used is Literary Arabic.

²Now one may even speak of tripartite division, namely, Standard Arabic, Modern Standard Arabic, and modern dialects; cf. Blau (1976:94).

*d*³ has disappeared, having merged with *z*.³ In the dialects of the sedentary population, interdental spirants have shifted to the corresponding occlusives. On the other hand, because of the spread of the *taẖīm* (suprasegmental pharyngalization) new emphatic consonants arose. Their phonemic load, however, as far as it is to be considered at all, is very limited. Vowels, especially short ones, are affected by far-reaching changes. In the field of morphosyntax, many of the numerous differences between Old Arabic and Neoarabic may be reduced to a common denominator: Old Arabic tends to be more synthetic, i.e. to utilize more bound morphemes, whereas Neoarabic is more analytic, i.e. it relies less on bound morphemes.⁴ Thus, in Neoarabic, the case and mood endings have disappeared, triggering further changes. Because of the disappearance of the case endings, word order has become more fixed. The marked tendency of Neoarabic is not to insert the object between verb and subject.⁵ Owing to the same propensity to mark the subject, as against the object, by fixed word order, the initial position of the subject before the verb becomes more frequent than in Standard Arabic.⁶ Hence, as in this position the verb agrees with the subject, the congruence of the verb was extended even to verbs preceding their subjects. This was prompted also by the desire to avoid ambiguity. This made it possible to distinguish the subject, no longer marked by case endings, from the object, if the two differed in gender and/or number. In many Neoarabic dialects analytic devices are used to mark direct object and the *nomen rectum* in a genitival construction.⁷ Because of the disappearance of both the case and mood endings,⁸ the functional differences between *ʔan* and *ʔanna*⁹ have been blurred, and these particles merged.¹⁰

A further aspect of the analytic trend in Neoarabic is the diminishing use of the dual¹¹, which, contrary to Standard Arabic, has completely disappeared in the verb, the adjective and the pronoun, and has become limited even in the field of the substantive. In the sedentary dialects,¹² the feminine plural of the pronoun, the verb and the adjective has been superseded by the masculine. In Middle Arabic texts as well as in many dialects,¹³ the comparative

³I am using the accepted transcriptions *d* and *z*, without implying that it was actually pronounced so in early times. In South Arabia, it seems, it was the *z* that was absorbed by *d*, if I interpret Landberg (1901:637) and Landberg (1942:2163-64, 2243-45) correctly.

⁴I am using the behaviorist definition of synthetic and analytic (cf. Bloomfield (1933:207)), preferring it to the mentalistic approach (see Kretschmer (1923:32) "synthesis (is) the inclusion of several ... concepts in one word The analytic type ... splits up one word, according to the concepts contained in it, into several words."). The mentalistic definition, in my mind, is inexpedient, since it includes as synthetic, items of vocabulary as Standard Arabic *zanama* "a piece cut out and left hanging from the ear of a camel (or sheep)".

⁵For particulars see Blau (1972:33-36).

⁶For this feature e.g. in Judaeo-Arabic v. Blau (1965:79-80). For a modern dialect Marçais (n.d.:623). On the other hand, in some dialects the word order predicate (verb) - subject prevails, see Grotzfeld (1965:98, §98).

⁷For Judaeo-Arabic see Blau (1965:81-83), for modern dialects Brockelmann (1908-13:II, 316; 238-39).

⁸As well as because of the blurring of the differences between *a* and *i*.

⁹As well as with *ʔinna*.

¹⁰Brockelmann (1908-13:II, 602) and the literature adduced by Blau (1966-67:210, note 54).

¹¹Cf. Brockelmann (1908-13:I, 456) and *infra* §6.6.1.1.

¹²See the literature presented by Blau (1966-67:206, note 41), and *infra* §6.3.

¹³See the literature presented by Blau (1966-67:234, note 157).

may be expressed by the positive with an adverb followed by "more." Moreover, Neoarabic exhibits a growing tendency of adding separate personal pronouns to the finite forms of the verb¹⁴ (not entirely absent from Standard Arabic either). The relative pronoun has become invariable, no longer agreeing with its antecedent in number and gender (and, of course, in case, after the disappearance of the case system).¹⁵

Yet the differences between the linguistic structures of Standard Arabic and Neoarabic are not confined to the difference between synthetic versus analytic features. The fixed alternation of syndetic and asyndetic sentences, so characteristic of Standard Arabic, no longer exists. In Neoarabic asyndetic sentences have become quite frequent, both in co-ordination and subordination. Co-ordinated asyndetic clauses are especially frequent after verbs denoting movement,¹⁶ subordinated ones in the function of object clauses.¹⁷ Profound changes have affected the numerals, changing their whole structure.¹⁸ The same applies to demonstrative pronouns, though perhaps to a smaller extent.¹⁹ In most dialects, the passive formed in Standard Arabic by internal vowel change, has been replaced by the former reflexive verbal forms.²⁰ There exists in Neoarabic a clear tendency to assign tenses according to the division of time. Consequently, the perfect (except in conditional clauses) is associated with the past only. As a rule, it no longer expresses wishes in genuine living usage.²¹ Similarly, the imperfect is no longer used in the past. *Lam* 'not', which in Standard Arabic governs the apocopate to mark the past, has disappeared in Neoarabic.²² *mâ* has become the "basic" negative particle.²³ Therefore, the functional load of *mâ*, already rather significant in Standard Arabic, has become so heavy that it has been supplanted in Neoarabic in the sense of "what" by words like *ʔayy shay/ʔêsh/ʔash*.²⁴ The relative pronoun tends to introduce substantive clauses as well.²⁵ Indirect questions often take the form of conditional clauses.²⁶

These features, which one may easily multiply, illustrate the difference between Standard Arabic and Neoarabic.

3. THE REDUNDANCY OF CASE ENDINGS

Recently, several scholars have called attention to the fact that the case system of Standard Arabic exhibits an unusually high percentage of redundancy. Ambros (1972) has, on the whole, contented himself with an analysis of the facts. Yet even he states in the end of his paper (p. 127) that, with all due qualifications, one may assume that quite early the case system of Standard Arabic prose (implicitly) reached the stage (explicitly) reflected

¹⁴See the literature presented by Blau (1966-67:389, note 2), further by Blau (1960:3,11, notes 1, 2).

¹⁵Brockelmann (1908-13:565). The use of the invariable relative pronoun was partly due to its more and more severing its ties with the antecedent, thus becoming a genuine subordinating conjunction.

¹⁶See Brockelmann (1908-13:473-74).

¹⁷See Blau (1966-67:492ff.) where additional literature is cited.

¹⁸See Brockelmann (1908-13:I,240-41, 267; II,275) and especially *infra* 6.6.6.

¹⁹See Fischer (1959). ²⁰See Blau (1966-67:150, §47) where additional literature is cited.

²¹See the literature cited Blau (1966-67:272, note 19). ²²See Brockelmann (1908-13:II,153-54, 184 rem). ²³See *ibid.*, 183. ²⁴Cf. Blau (1966-67:139-41) with additional literature.

²⁵Cf. the literature cited *ibid.*, 525, note 42. ²⁶See *ibid.*, 601, note 52.

by modern Arabic dialects. Although he adds that for the time being no diachronic and morphosyntactic generalizations may be made, he nevertheless concludes that this fact, apparently, provides us with a starting point for a better understanding of the interdependence of Standard Arabic and the dialects. Corriente²⁷ goes one step further. He assumes²⁸ that dialects with and without *ʿiʿrāb* (case-endings) coexisted, before the rise of Islam, within a single structural frame, where *ʿiʿrāb* did not mean much (except for its rhetorical prestige and social value), and this because, no matter whether it was present or absent, its functional yield was almost zero, and it could not impede the mutual understanding between the two types of dialects. Hijaz, Syria and Lower Mesopotamia are, in his opinion,²⁹ the most likely areas where, before Islam, functionally low-yielding devices began to be dropped so that Neoarabic³⁰ emerged and its more analytical and efficient solutions started a wave which, favored by a drift in a weak spot of Semitic structures, would eventually reach southern Hijaz, Tihāma, Yemen and the rest of the Arabian peninsula, to the point of causing complete elimination of *ʿiʿrāb* in Arabic dialects by the end of the ninth century, and this without much interference by substratum languages. The most extreme view is upheld by Abdo (1973:122-29), who infers from the redundancy of the case endings that originally the final vowels constituted invariable parts of the word.

3.1. Is Fixed Word Order an Analytical Feature?

At first, I would like to make a remark in matters of nomenclature, which is, admittedly, a question of wording only.³¹ Both Ambros (1972:126, especially note 53), and Corriente (1971: 31, 38) consider word order to be an ANALYTICAL feature characterizing Standard Arabic. One will readily admit that analytical languages display a marked tendency to distinguish, for example, between subject and direct object by means of fixed word order. Nevertheless, the interdependence between analytical language types and fixed word order is by no means automatic. Analytical languages which mark the direct object by morph words (as does Hebrew, for instance), often preserve quite a free word order. Accordingly, the existence of preferred word order in Standard Arabic by no means proves its analytic character.

3.2. Redundancy Characteristics of Case Systems in General

Nor does Standard Arabic exhibit a less marked synthetical character,³² only because the case system is redundant. One must not overemphasize the importance of redundancy.³³ Redundancy is an integral part of every language system, and one must not consider redundant features as such a secondary set or even a mere RELIC. Accordingly, the insignificant functional yield of the Arabic case system does not demonstrate that in the underlying spoken language case endings had been dropped. Even less may one infer from it (*pace* Abdo) that originally the final vowels formed a part of the word, to develop only later to case endings. The system of case markers, at least in languages in which the verb precedes its complement, seems in general to be redundant to quite a high degree, although, admittedly, the measure of redundancy of the Arabic

²⁷Corriente devoted two papers to this subject (1971, 1973-74). The second one is a reply to Blau (1972). The introductory part to Corriente (1975:38-40) gives a clear condensed account of his views on this subject.

²⁸See Corriente (1973-74:159). ²⁹See Corriente (1975:40).

³⁰Corriente, *ibid.*, speaks of Middle Arabic. I prefer, however, to call Middle Arabic the language consisting of Standard Arabic and Neoarabic (as well as pseudo-correct) elements, as represented by texts, the authors of which basically wanted to use Standard Arabic, but either did not master Standard Arabic sufficiently or did not bother to use it according to all its requirements.

³¹Cf. already Blau (1972:29-30). ³²*Pace* Corriente (1973-74:158, 163). ³³Cf. Blau (1972:30-31).

case system seems to be especially high.³⁴ Corriente (1971:46, note 40) himself arrived at the conclusion that in Russian 71.2% of the case endings are redundant, only 28.7% being functionally relevant.³⁵ Since high redundancy is, it seems, a characteristic feature of case systems in many languages (and perhaps even in all of them), one hesitates to attribute special significance to it in Standard Arabic, even though, as stated, it exhibits an especially high rate — since (as admitted by Corriente (1971:43; 1973-74:160); cf. also Blau (1972:31)) insignificant functional yield of the case endings is characteristic of Semitic languages in general.

3.3. Irrelevance of Case Endings

In his second paper, Corriente (1973-74:159-60) quite ingeniously, assigns a new meaning to "irrelevance," opposing it to "redundancy."³⁶ "In the example of Russian, we would say that the case endings . . . might be redundant, but not irrelevant as in their Arabic parallels..., where the endings can be dropped in pausal form without prompting any judgement of ungrammaticality from a speaker, unlike the case in the Russian examples. One might say that irrelevance of a linguistic sign, i.e. the accessory and dispensable character of this, lays one

³⁴According to Corriente's statistics (1971:36) even in pre-Islamic poetry the rate of functionally dispensable cases almost reached 90%, whereas in other branches it varies between about 97% and 100%(!). There exists, of course, the practical difficulty in determining the functional yield of cases (see Blau (1972:36-37)). Nevertheless, the overall impression of Corriente's statistics is, no doubt, correct. Cf. also Ambros's (1973:119ff.) careful analysis. For languages in which the complement precedes the verb cf. Vennemann (1975:289-90).

³⁵Corriente (1973-74:162, note 10) states that in Greek and Turkish the functional yield of the case endings is much higher. I do not, however, follow his reasoning. He claims that the failure to involve a sizable number of cases and still obtain grammatical sentences points to a very high functional yield for the case feature in these languages. If I understand his claim correctly, I would, on the contrary, infer from the fact that the commutation of cases frequently leads to ungrammaticality and unintelligibility that the case system is highly redundant, since only one interpretation of case form is possible in a certain syntactical environment, so that the function of the case is sufficiently indicated by the syntactical environment (as in Standard Arabic the genitive *baytin* is sufficiently indicated by a preceding preposition, as *fi*, i.e. *fi baytin* 'in a house'). In accordance with this conception, I have, for the sake of checking, analysed again the two Greek stories by Aesop used by Corriente admitting, of course, that it is sometimes rather problematic to determine the functional yield of cases (cf. Blau (1972:36)). Taking also the meaning into consideration, I arrived at the conclusion that among about fifty cases only eight were not redundant, i.e. 16% (as against 61% claimed by Corriente). Moreover, I have tentatively analysed a small passage in Hungarian, a language exhibiting a case system very much reminiscent of that in Turkish (although in Hungarian the direct object's position is free, whereas in Turkish it precedes the verb). Since Corriente (1973-74:162) objects to the use of translations, especially of religious texts (although I do not conceive how this affects the CASE SYSTEM of the target language), I analysed an original work, Jókai (n.d.:196) and found the measure of redundancy to be quite high. Among about 59 cases of nominative, genitive and accusative occurring on this page (I did not take into account cases that are expressed in Arabic and other Semitic languages by prepositions followed by the genitive) cases were redundant in 53 instances, i.e. almost 90%, and functionally relevant only in six instances (somewhat over 10%).

³⁶Not however in Corriente (1971) where for example on p. 46, note 40, he speaks of "functionally irrelevant case endings" in Russian, rather than redundant ones.

step beyond the mere redundancy.... This precisely constitutes the main difference between the redundant (less often so, though) inflectional endings of the most characteristically syncretical Indo-European languages, and the almost constant irrelevance of the Semitic case system."

I only want to remark, in passing, that the Arabic case system is not as irrelevant as it would seem from Corriente's wording. It is in pause only³⁷ that case endings are omitted in Standard Arabic, whereas in context they must not be dispensed with. Accordingly, *ʔi-l-kitābi/li -l-ʔaxi* 'in the book/to the brother' always have to carry case endings e.g. when followed by an attribute (as *ʔi-l-kitābi -l-ʔamīli/li -l-ʔaxi -l-ʔamīli* 'in the beautiful book/to the handsome brother').³⁸ Moreover, the pause does not affect the case endings of the sound masculine plural and the dual. Besides, what Corriente calls "irrelevance" is not an altogether unknown phenomenon outside Standard Arabic. Thus in Hungarian, for example, a language with a very conspicuous case system, 'the man's house' may be expressed by *az embernek a háza*, literally 'the man-to the house-his', i.e. 'to the man his house'. Yet the ending *-nek* (corresponding to *-s* in *man's*) is more often than not omitted, no matter in which position.³⁹ Moreover, in certain cases, the accusative ending may be dispensed with.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, we can readily concede that the irrelevance of the Standard Arabic case system is much more far-reaching.

3.4. Neoarabic Arose as a Result of the Great Arab Conquests

One will have, however, to bear in mind in which context the irrelevance of the Standard Arabic case system was claimed. Corriente assumes that *ʔi-rāb*-less (i.e., Neoarabic) dialects existed as early as the seventh and possibly the sixth century at least (Corriente, 1973-74:157). The most likely areas where, in Corriente's opinion, these dialects emerged were northern Hijaz, Syria and Lower Mesopotamia (Corriente, 1973-74:159; 1975:40). The fact that the case endings of Standard Arabic were to a very high degree redundant and irrelevant, provided the similar structural frame that allowed mutual intelligibility between both *ʔi-rāb*-preserving and *ʔi-rāb*-less dialects, as well as the identification of inflected and uninflected forms within one and the same body of linguistic material (Corriente, 1973-74:158), so that speakers of both types of dialects could understand each other with relative ease and could share a culture which made the success of Islam possible (Corriente, 1975:39, note 1). In Corriente's opinion, only the existence of *ʔi-rāb*-less dialects already before the Islam explains the general and thorough evolution from *ʔi-rāb*-preserving dialects as attested already in Christian Arabic texts from the ninth century on, especially if we consider the rather low rate of change that characterizes all Semitic languages and Arabic above all (Corriente, 1973-74:155). It also eliminates the need for the substratum theory, according to which the loss of the *ʔi-rāb* must be blamed on the *muwalladūn*, the half-breed offspring on foreign soil of Arab invaders (Corriente, 1971:40).

³⁷In the first draft of an interesting paper which I was able to examine through the courtesy of the author, R. Steiner claims that the elision of short final vowels in pause is a Proto-Semitic feature, adducing examples from Biblical Hebrew and Akkadian. I would rather attribute the elision of final short vowels in the pause to a phonetic drift, which caused this feature independently in various Semitic tongues.

³⁸Yet we have to admit (see Birkeland (1940:105)) that already in Standard Arabic sometimes pausal forms encroach upon context forms. This phenomenon, however, is quite marginal in Standard Arabic.

³⁹See Szabó (1956:334), Tompa (1962:288ff.).

⁴⁰See Tompa (1962:153-54). For the absence of case endings in indeterminate direct objects in Turkish cf. Meillet-Cohen (1952:353).

In my opinion it is not altogether difficult to imagine that the sudden radical changes that affected Standard Arabic to give rise to the Neoarabic language type were the result of the great Arab conquests. On the contrary, it would rather be surprising if no linguistic changes had occurred as a consequence of these events which altered the whole history of the Arabs, their social conditions and their mentality. And it was Corriente himself who has provided us with an additional reason for the loss of the case endings. Since in the pause caseless forms were used, the whole system of cases has become somewhat unstable. Then,⁴¹ the native population, subjugated by the Arabs, took over these caseless pausal forms, using them in context as well. Since many of their languages had lost their inflectional system, they adapted the newly acquired Arabic language to the system of their caseless native languages, utilizing the caseless pausal forms in every position.

3.5. The Alleged Mutual Intelligibility between Old Arabic and Neoarabic

Furthermore, I cannot concur with Corriente's opinion that the redundancy and irrelevance of the case system of Standard Arabic provided a similar structural frame that allowed the mutual intelligibility of both *ʔiʕnâb*-preserving and *ʔiʕnâb*-less dialects, so that these dialects could share one culture. In section 2 I have given a long list of quite significant differences distinguishing Neoarabic from Standard Arabic. All these differences are attested as early as the ninth century in Christian Arabic texts from South-Palestine,⁴² and some of them occur even earlier,⁴³ so that we are compelled to consider Neoarabic, from its very beginnings, a linguistic stage definitely different from Standard Arabic. The speakers of Neoarabic were not just speakers of dialects which were basically identical with the speech of tribes that were part of the culture of Standard Arabic, differing from them only by the absence of the redundant and irrelevant case endings, as Corriente would have us believe. Accordingly, it would be hard to understand how speakers of Neoarabic dialects could possibly compose poetry in Standard Arabic. It was exactly the necessity of enabling Neoarabic speakers after the rise of the Islam and the great conquests to participate in the linguistic culture of Standard Arabic that gave rise to the science of grammar among the Arabs. Only with the help of grammars could speakers of Neoarabic write Standard Arabic poetry. This, however, is quite inconceivable before the Islam because of the lack of any grammar that could assist speakers of *ʔiʕnâb*-less dialects when trying to switch over to Standard Arabic. Corriente (1975:38, note 1) speaks of the appreciation of Standard Arabic poetry not only in Ḥīra, but also in the Gassānid kingdom. Yet, in Ḥīra at least, Standard Arabic poetry was not merely appreciated, but also produced. 'Adī ibn Zayd of Ḥīra has to be considered one of the great names of ancient Standard Arabic poetry.⁴⁴ How then can we agree with Corriente's claim that the inhabitants of Ḥīra had already switched to Neoarabic and were nevertheless able to compose Standard Arabic poetry, in spite of the considerable differences between the two language types, of which the case system of Standard Arabic was but a part?⁴⁵

⁴¹See Nöldeke (1904:5), Brockelmann (1908-13:462), Fleisch (1961:282), Blau (1965:3).

⁴²See the synopsis given by Blau (1966-67, 42ff.) ⁴³See Blau (1965:123ff) *infra* 6.2.

⁴⁴According to *Kitāb al-Aghānī*¹, vol. xv, 97, 15ff., quoted by Wellhausen (1897:232-33), to be sure, 'Adī's poetry was not transmitted, because it contravened the "ways of the poets." This does not, however, refer to 'Adī's language.

⁴⁵Though not a minor item, despite its redundancy and (partial) irrelevance (see 3.2.). Cf. also Nöldeke (1904:4).

4. THE POSSIBILITY OF THE EMERGENCE OF NEOARABIC OUTSIDE THE *ʿarabiyya*

On the other hand, there is no reason in principle not to allow for the possibility of the emergence of the Neoarabic language type before Islam with tribes that did not constitute part of the culture of Standard Arabic poetry. In this case, however, one must not, of course, speak of diglossia, since with such tribes only one language type should have existed, namely the Neoarabic one. Since in Epigraphic South Arabian, at least from the middle Sabeian period, case distinctions had disappeared (see Beeston (1962:39, §33:7)), it stands to reason that some tribes of South Arabian origin had no *ʿiʿnāb*.

4.1. Nothing Must Be Inferred from Border Dialects for Central Dialects

In a closely reasoned paper, Diem (1973), relying on the spelling of Arabic proper nouns in Nabatean inscriptions, suggested that Nabatean Arabic had given up the Semitic case system as early as the first century B.C. As stated, this suggestion does not raise any theoretical difficulty. The Nabateans did not participate in the culture of Standard Arabic poetry, but used (Nabatean) Aramaic, a language quite different from both Standard Arabic and Neoarabic. On the other hand, it is impossible to follow Diem's (1973:237) inference that for this reason it is difficult to assume that the adjacent Central Arabic dialects had preserved their case system as late as the seventh century. Diem⁶ completely disregarded the essential difference between a border dialect⁷ like Nabatean Arabic, culturally assimilated to Aramaic, and those central dialects that were part of *ʿarabiyya*. Whatever the linguistic system of Nabatean Arabic was, nothing may be inferred from it for the "central" Arabic dialects.

4.2. The Spelling of Arabic Proper Names in Nabatean Aramaic Inscriptions

I do not think that Diem has successfully proven even his thesis that Nabatean Arabic itself had lost its case endings (though, admittedly, the contrary, that it did preserve the Semitic case system, cannot be demonstrated either). Diem, quite ingeniously, relies on the difference of spelling between Arabic theophoric and "secular" masculine proper names having the construct state form, as occurring in the Nabatean Aramaic inscriptions. Whereas theophoric proper names (type: *ʿbdʿlhy*) tend to end in *y*, secular ones mostly end in *w* (type: *ʿbwʿwshw*), as do also simple (not compound) proper names (type: *ʿbdw*). Diem (1973:234-35) concluded that the theophoric names had become real composite nouns, which have been transmitted by scribal tradition as such, i.e. with the historical genitive ending *y*. On the other hand, the secular proper names had not become fixed phrases, but were formed *ad hoc*. Therefore, they were not transmitted as such by scribal tradition, but were newly formed, hence their ending *w*, instead of the expected *y*, has to be interpreted as a mere orthographic relic, demonstrating the disappearance of the case system.⁸

This ingenious reasoning, which is admittedly quite possible and even convincing, would be acceptable, if these proper nouns occurred in genuine Nabatean Arabic texts.⁹ Yet the occurrence of these ARABIC proper nouns in ARAMAIC inscriptions, written in a language which

⁶Cf. also Corriente (1975:39-40, note 1).

⁷As a matter of fact, Diem (1973) also dubs Nabatean Arabic a border dialect.

⁸Although Diem's important observation is, on the whole, correct, he somewhat exaggerated the difference. In Diem (1973:233, note 44) he regarded as certainly secular proper names the names ending in *qumw*, which were, however, interpreted by Cantineau (1930-32:II,142a) as theophoric.

⁹For Nabatean Arabic texts, though influenced by Aramaic spelling habits, see 4.3.

had already lost its case endings, also allows for a different interpretation. It may, *mutatis mutandis*, be compared with e.g. the use of Latin words and phrases in English texts. Just as in such texts (unlike German) Latin words stand in the nominative (as in 'I saw the *proconsul*/the son of the *proconsul*'), although Latin has its case system, so do single Arabic proper nouns occurring in the Nabatean Aramaic inscriptions (type: *bdw*), as well as secular compound proper names (type: *bw²wshw*), which, as recognized by Diem, had not become fixed phrases and, therefore, formed *ad hoc*. On the contrary, theophoric proper names were taken over as a compound phrase from Arabic and therefore, as a rule, had the genitive ending in accordance with Arabic grammar (type: *bd²lhy*), just as in English the Latin phrase *vox populi* terminates, in accordance with Latin grammar, in the genitive, whereas similar phrases formed *ad hoc*, as e.g. *vox Publii Cornelii Scipionis*, would perhaps take the form the *vox* of *Publius Cornelius Scipio*, thus resembling the type *bw²wshw*. Admittedly, this interpretation of the material does not necessarily supersede Diem's thesis. It is, however, in accordance with all the facts known⁵⁰ and is not less plausible than Diem's proposal.

4.3. The Influence of Nabatean Aramaic on the Inscription of an-Namâra

Diem (1973:236) has also studied the Arabic Nabatean inscription of an-Namâra (328 C.E.) and has correctly stated that the use of *w* as suffix of proper names⁵¹ in the genitive and the

⁵⁰The exceptional cases adduced (Diem, 1975:235) do not prove anything. The unique spelling *grm²lb²lyw* is, it seems, best explained as an error, due to the blend of the two possible forms whereas the alternation *bn²lqynw*/*bn²lqyny* simply exhibits the loan form versus the genuine Arabic form. The loan form ends, as usual, in *w*, since the name does not reflect a genuine compound, the Arabic form has *y*, marking the genitive.

⁵¹I think, however, that Diem (1975:235, note 56) is wrong in attributing the *w* ending to the common noun *frs(w)* (for common nouns ending in *w* see *infra* in the inscription of Higrâ). *frsw* occurs in line 4 of the inscription in the sequel *frswlrum*. This has either been interpreted as *furs war-rûm* 'the Persians and the Byzantines' or divided *frsw lrum* (see the literature adduced by Elatri (1974:85)—without, however, agreeing with his fantastic Indo-European etymologies—the last, as far as my knowledge goes, to deal with this inscription; cf. also Altheim and Stiehl (1965:316)). *Prima facie*, the first interpretation is much more convincing, since one expects the parallel mention of both great powers. This interpretation, of course, excludes Altheim and Stiehl's rather fanciful reconstruction of the historical facts, as if the alleged omission of the Persians in the inscription demonstrates that Imru²u-l-Qays and his sons have become infidel to the Persians. [By the way, their reading (p. 315), following R. Koeber, of the accepted *byn* in line 3 as *by²*, i.e. *bâya²a*, although it fits well into the context, is wrong. As I learn from M. Sharon, who has also furnished me with a photograph of the original, the final *n* of *byn* is certain.] Against it, however, the objection was raised that one would have expected *w²lrum* rather than *lrum*. Yet the omission of the *2* of the definite article after *wa*, as against its preservation in absolute word initial throughout the whole inscription, should not be surprising. In Standard Arabic itself (see Wright (1933:I,74) the spelling of the imperative of *verba primæ hamzatæ*, as a rule, exhibits *aliq conjunctionis*; after *wa* (and *fa*), however, it is usually omitted, e.g. 'come!' spelled *yt* as against *w²t*, reflecting *ti* (or, outside sentence initial, *ti*), and *wa²ti*. The spelling proposed here exactly matches the spelling of the Christian Arabic text in Coptic characters edited by Sobhy (see Blau (forthcoming, §17.1)). As a rule, as in the inscription of an-Namâra, the definite article is spelled as if it contained a stable glottal stop (e.g. *fi elfebel*, corresponding to Standard Arabic *fi -l-jibâli* 'in the mountains'). When, however, the definite article is preceded by a word which contains one consonant only, including *wa* 'and', the vowel of the article is invariably omitted, e.g. *wessaleh*, corresponding to Standard Arabic *wa-ş-şalât* 'and the prayer'. There is no reason not to assume a similar spelling system for the inscription of an-Namâra, which is, as well known, preclassical.

accusative may be interpreted as reflecting the disappearance of the case endings. One may add that the same applies to the almost pure Arabic inscription of Ḥigrā from 267 C.E. where the common noun (ʔl)qbrw⁵² stands once in the nominative and once in the accusative; a compound theophoric proper name having the construct state form followed by the name of a goddess⁵³ ends in w, as do also two simple proper names, one in the nominative and one in the accusative. Yet this interpretation is not the only possible solution. The overall use of the final w may be due to the influence of the spelling of Nabatean Aramaic on Nabatean Arabic which, later, decisively influenced Standard Arabic spelling as well.

The influence of the spelling of Nabatean Aramaic can be detected in the following items of Nabatean Arabic and/or Standard Arabic orthography:

(i) The consonants of Nabatean Arabic⁵⁴ and Standard Arabic that are not contained in the inventory of the Nabatean Aramaic consonants are marked by letters that correspond to the letters in Nabatean Aramaic words etymologically related. Thus, they spell *zaby* 'gazelle' with initial *z*, influenced by Aramaic *ṭabhyā*, although *z* and *ṭ* were presumably quite dissimilar.⁵⁵

⁵²Lidzbarski (1908-09), to be sure, prefers the reading *qbwṛ*, *r* and *w* being quite similar. These forms, however, would constitute *hapax legomena*. Moreover, in the construct state Nabatean Aramaic invariably has *qbr*, and the first occurrence of *qbrw/qbwṛ* (line 1 *ṭh/dnh qbrw/qbwṛ ṣn^h* 'this is THE tomb which X has made ...') has to be interpreted as a construct. Lidzbarski has interpreted this sentence as the isolation of the natural subject 'this tomb, X has made it ...'. This, however, contravenes the usual opening of Nabatean tomb inscriptions, where the fixed formula is 'this is the tomb which X has made...'. For the same reason, one has to reject Cantineau's (1930-32:II,38) interpretation 'this is a tomb which X has made' (so also Diem (1973:228, note 11)). Cantineau applied this forced interpretation, because (quite correctly, 1930-32:II,172) he regarded this relative clause as an Arabic calque, and since in Standard Arabic asyndetic relative clauses are limited to indefinite antecedents, he considered *qbrw* to be indefinite, thus changing not only the fixed formula of Nabatean inscriptions, but also substituting an indefinite tomb for the necessarily definite one. Not in vain did Cantineau (1930-32:I,112) hesitate between the translations "le tombeau" and "un tombeau". The only interpretation fitting both the accepted formula and the context is to assume for Nabatean Arabic, which is reflected by this passage, a type of attribute (relative) clause different from Standard Arabic usage, i.e. the antecedent standing in construct relation to the following asyndetic attribute clause, a construction preserved in Standard Arabic only after antecedents denoting time (see Reckendorf (1921:390) where, in note 1, in my opinion, he correctly surmises that such clauses originally did not contain pronouns referring back to the antecedent and that these pronouns penetrated such sentences only by blending with ordinary asyndetic relative clauses. We have to assume a similar development also in our case. This type of attribute clause (lacking the pronoun referring back to the antecedent) is frequent in Akkadian (see von Soden 1952:219, §166)).

⁵³As a matter of fact, Diem (1973:235-36, esp. note 49) excluded the analysis of feminine proper nouns from his paper. Accordingly, I am adducing it only for the sake of completeness.

⁵⁴It stands to reason that the consonantal inventory of Nabatean Arabic was more or less identical with that of Standard Arabic, and I base my description of this assumption. If however Nabatean Arabic lost consonants through the influence of Aramaic, then Nabatean Arabic may exhibit genuine spelling of at least some of these consonants and only Standard Arabic reflects the (full) impact of the Nabatean Aramaic spelling.

⁵⁵See Blau (1970:59-60). The only difficulty that is not solved by this assumption is the use of *ḡ* in Standard Arabic for marking *ḡ*. For attempts to explain this spelling see Blau, (1970:60-63, Fischer (1968:55-63).

(ii) As in Nabatean Aramaic \hat{u} ⁵⁶ and \hat{i} are regularly marked by w and y respectively, yet \hat{a} is indicated by ʾ only in word final position in both Nabatean Arabic⁵⁷ and archaic Standard Arabic, as it is reflected by ancient Koran manuscripts.⁵⁸ In later, ordinary Standard Arabic, however, as well known, medial \hat{a} is marked by ʾ as well (except certain words in which the ancient orthography has been preserved). Already in the pre-Islamic inscription of *Umm ij-Jimāl in kâtib* one finds the spelling ʾ after the k to denote the \hat{a} (see Littmann (1929:197-204)).

(iii) If case endings had in fact, as Diem surmises, disappeared in Nabatean Arabic, then spellings like $n\hat{f}s(h)$ 'tomb', rather than $n\hat{f}s(h)w$ (*an-Namâra*, line 1) have to be interpreted as representing the actual linguistic situation. If, however, the case endings did survive, the absence of final w ⁵⁹ has to be attributed to the influence of Nabatean Aramaic spelling, e.g. $n\hat{f}s(h)$ 'tomb'. In Standard Arabic, at any rate, it stands to reason that the non-marking, in spelling, of the short case-ending vowels, with or without nunation, ultimately stems from the impact of Nabatean Aramaic orthography. Because this spelling, as a rule, gave rise to forms which were identical with the pausal ones, they were re-interpreted as representing pausal forms, especially, because many people, insufficiently familiar with writing, spelled Arabic quite slowly.⁶⁰ The transition from mere imitation of Nabatean Aramaic spelling to pausal spelling was made when the Arabs started to spell the feminine nominal ending *-at*, even in the construct state by $t\hat{a} marbû\hat{t}a$ (an h with added diacritics), as well as to mark words ending in context in the indeterminate accusative suffix *-an*, by ʾ , i.e. $-\hat{a}$.⁶¹ In Nabatean Arabic the feminine suffix *-at* in construct is still invariably spelled by $-t$, as *mdynt* 'the town of' (*an-Namâra*, line 3). This spelling is also found in ancient Koran manuscripts. Nöldeke (1938:27) cites cases of spelling with t , rather than with $t\hat{a} marbû\hat{t}a$: all cases adduced invariably occur in the construct state.⁶² Yet the spelling with $t\hat{a} marbû\hat{t}a$ in the construct state is, as I learn from M. Sharon, already attested, e.g. in the word *sanat* 'year' in line 3 of the *Mu'âwiya's dam* inscription from the year 58 hejira, see Grohmann (1962:56, inscr. 268).

⁵⁶See Cantineau (1930-32:I.47).

⁵⁷Cf. *an-Namâra*, line 2 $wmlwkhm$ = *wamulûkhum*; line 3 *mdynt* = *madînat*, as against line 1 $\text{ʾ}ltj$ = $\text{ʾ}attâj$. For final \hat{a} marked by ʾ see $d\text{ʾ}$ = $dhâ$ 'this', e.g. *Ḥigrâ*, line 8.

⁵⁸See Nöldeke (1938:31-33).

⁵⁹For this reason of marking short u by w see recently Diem (1973:232, esp. note 34).

⁶⁰See Nöldeke (1904:7). ⁶¹See *infra*, §4.3.(IV.).

⁶²See already Fischer (1967:58, note 82). Accordingly the instances adduced by Nöldeke (1938:27), which are alternatively analysed as feminine singulars or as feminine plurals (\hat{a} preceding the t not being marked), are only ambiguous, to be interpreted as feminine singular as well, when they stand in the construct state. In the absolute, however, they have to be interpreted as feminine plurals, since in the absolute the feminine nominal ending *-at* is never spelled with t . Spitaler (1960:214, note 6; 220, note 25) is of the opinion that historically it was Aramaic that influenced Standard Arabic spelling (cf. also Altheim and Stiehl (1965:360)). As a result of this influence, Standard Arabic is spelled as according to the pausal pronunciation. This opinion, however, does not take into account the spelling with $t\hat{a} marbû\hat{t}a$ even in the construct state and the use of ʾ to mark the *-an* suffix, both of which have no parallel in Aramaic and have to be explained as genuine pausal writing. Fischer (1967:54) on the contrary, pivots his claim that Standard Arabic spelling does not reflect pausal orthography, upon the use of $t\hat{a} marbû\hat{t}a$. He argues that, were Standard Arabic

(iv) Through the influence of Nabatean Aramaic, proper names in Nabatean Arabic, and sometimes even common nouns, are spelled with final *w*.⁶³ This feature is preserved in the orthography of Standard Arabic in the proper name *ʿamr* only, which is spelled with final *w* to denote both the nominative and the genitive, i.e., *ʿamrun/ʿamrin*, whereas the accusative

orthography to reflect pausal spelling, one would expect nouns ending in the feminine suffix *-at* to have *-atâ* in the indeterminate accusative, rather than *-ah* as in the nominative and the genitive, just as masculine nouns end in *-â* in the indeterminate accusative, as against zero in the nominative and genitive. This difficulty in the Standard Arabic pausal spelling has already been recognized by Birkeland (1940:97). Birkeland, quite prudently, did not therefore renounce the idea of pausal spelling altogether. Yet his proposal that *tanwîn* in the feminine was earlier omitted than in the masculine does not sound convincing, since it is difficult to understand why it should be so. Nevertheless, it stands to reason that the shift of *-atan* to *-ah* reflects linguistic reality, since, according to Fischer (1967:58) himself, it is demonstrated not only by the rhymes in the Koran, but in ancient poetry as well, a difficulty which was well realized by Fischer, without his trying to solve it. Yet it can easily be explained by analogy, rather than by sound shift. It seems that the pausal indeterminate accusative after *tâ marbûta* was adapted to the pausal indeterminate nominative/genitive on the one hand, and to the pausal determinate forms on the other (cf. also Blau (1968:11; 1969:189, note 3)). The reason that this adaptation occurred in these nouns, rather than in others, seems to be that in them the difference between the pausal indefinite accusative and the other forms was greater than in other nouns. In a word like *malik* 'king' the pausal indefinite accusative was *malikâ*, as against pausal indefinite nominative/definite accusative forms *malik*, the opposition being expressed by *â* : zero. In a noun like *malikat* 'queen', however, the pausal indefinite accusative should have been **malikatâ* as against *malikah* in the other cases, the opposition being expressed by *-atâ* : *ah*. Because the pausal indefinite accusative was too different, it was adapted to the other cases, and thus *malikah* became the general pausal form. Since Fischer's central proof for the non-pausal character of Standard Arabic orthography is thus rejected, there is no reason for being hypercritical and interpret other features of Standard Arabic orthography as non-pausal. Thus, Fischer (1967:57, note 80), dubs pausal forms like *hâd* of *hâdin* 'guiding' "pseudo-pausal rhyme forms," since, in his opinion, genuine pausal forms should exhibit *-î*, because *-în* is shortened from *-în* (cf. also Nöldeke (1938:27, note 2), who explains this spelling as being due to the analogy of the genitive nunation). Yet this interpretation does not take into account the relative chronology, pausal *hâd*, etc., being derived from *hâdin*, etc., AFTER the shortening of the long *î* of *-în*. In fact (see Birkeland (1940:68)) *hâd*, etc., rather than *hâdî*, etc., is the accepted pausal form (although this was influenced by the spelling, see Birkeland (1940:70)). Similarly, Fischer (1967:50, note 67, and esp. p. 57) considered the pausal form *-â* for the indeterminate accusative a pseudo-pausal form, due to the analogy of nouns like *hudan*, *hawan*, *ʿaşan*, *ʿatan*, although he admits (p. 54) that the spelling with *-â*, according to the testimony of the rhymes of the Koran, exhibits linguistic reality, rather than an orthographic peculiarity. Yet the analogy with nouns terminating in *-an* should rather have entailed spelling with *alif maqṣûra biṣûrat ʿalyâ*, since nouns ending in it are much more frequent than those ending in ordinary *alif maqṣûra* (among the four nouns enumerated by Fischer himself, three end in *-y*). Moreover, one does not understand why these forms should have affected the indefinite rather than the definite accusative. Fischer's (1967:57) claim against the authenticity of the rhymes of the Koran in that they exhibit long vowels in closed syllables as well as doubly closed syllables, which contravene Old Arabic syllable structure, begs the question. Such syllables admittedly contravene Old Arabic syllable structure in CONTEXT forms, yet not in pause. Fischer denies the reality of Old Arabic pausal forms and rather regards them as already representing Neoarabic. Yet these pausal forms, which are closer to Neoarabic than the context forms and the spread of which was one of the reasons for the emergence of the Neoarabic language type (see *supra* 3.4, end), were a part of the system of Standard Arabic and in them a syllable structure, different from that of the context forms, obtained.

⁶³See *supra*.

**amran* is already spelled with final *ʾ*, the general use of which in Standard Arabic orthography for marking final *-an* already exhibits the transition to pausal spelling. Since even in Standard Arabic (in **amr*) final *w* may, through the impact of Nabatean Aramaic orthography, denote both *-un* and *-in*, the use of invariable final *w* in proper nouns in Nabatean Arabic does not necessarily reflect the disappearance of the case endings either and MAY also be due to the influence of Nabatean Aramaic orthography.

(v) Finally, I would like to adduce another possible case of the influence of Nabatean Aramaic spelling on the orthography of archaic Standard Arabic, which, however, is much less compelling than the preceding features. Spitaler (1960:212ff.) has made a very good case for the spelling of nouns of the type *ṣalât* with *w* preceding the *tâ marbûṭa* being due to the orthographic analogy of the two Aramaic loans *ṣalât* and *zakât*, which, in Aramaic, exhibit *w* preceding the *t* (cf. also Altheim and Stiehl (1967:8-14)). I wonder whether this feature could not be due to multiple causation, being also influenced by the Nabatean Aramaic spelling of the goddess, whose name in Standard Arabic (*Manât*) is spelled in the Koran 53, 20 with *w* preceding the *t*, as *Mnwt(w/y)*.⁶⁴ Spitaler (1960:220), to be sure, interprets the Nabatean Aramaic form as a plural *Manawât*.⁶⁵ Yet, although this interpretation cannot be rejected,⁶⁶ in my opinion the reading of *mnwtw* as *Manôtu* is more likely:⁶⁷ all the three goddesses cited in *sûra* 53, 19-20, namely *allât*, *alʿUzzâ* and *Manât*, are attested in the Nabatean pantheon⁶⁸ and therefore, *prima facie*, one is inclined to identify Nabatean *Mnwt*, and Koranic *Mnwt*. If this assumption proves true, *Mnwt*, besides Aramaic *ṣalôtâ* and *zokûtâ*, gave rise to the archaic spelling of *-ât* with *w*+*tâ marbûṭa*.

5. THE LANGUAGE OF THE KORAN

Because of the central position of the Koran, a plethora of studies of its linguistic character exist, giving rise to various theories. I shall dispense with the hypercritical thesis of Vollers (1906) recently renewed by Kahle in a more subtle form; see the literature presented

⁶⁴See Cantineau (1930-32:II6a).

⁶⁵He relies on Caskel (1926:24, note 4). The first one to interpret Nabatean *Mnwtw* as *Manawât(u)* was, it seems, Nöldeke (1887:709) who adduced *Manawat* occurring in the inscription of a Semitic legionary in Hungary, following I. Goldziher's suggestion. This was accepted in the current Biblical dictionaries, e.g. F. Buhl in Gesenius (1915:437b); cf. also his article in *EI*¹, s.v. *Manât*. See also Wellhausen (1897:28); further Diem (1973:236, note 49) who, however, seems to prefer its interpretation as a singular.

⁶⁶The main proof for it being *Manawat* is presented in the preceding note.

⁶⁷As a matter of fact, Caskel, on whom Spitaler relied, renounced his opinion (Caskel 1954:46-47), interpreting the Nabatean form as *Manôtu*. One has also to take into account the fact that Nöldeke accepted the interpretation as *Manawât* mainly because of his theory that *w* must not be suffixed to diptotic proper nouns (as is *Manât*, terminating in *-ât*); cf. Nöldeke (1887:709, note 3). In the meantime, however, this theory has proved fallacious (see Diem (1973:231) with additional literature). On the other hand, one has to admit that *Manât* remains the only proper noun terminating in *-atw* (see Diem (1973:235-36)). Cantineau (1930-32:I,47-48 (cf. also II,212)) explains *Manôtu(u)*, rather than *Manât*, as exhibiting an exceptional shift *â > ô*. One may also analyse it as original *Manawt*, with the feminine suffix *-t*, rather than **Manawat*, with the feminine suffix *-at*.

⁶⁸See Cantineau (1930-32:II,169).

in Fück (1950:3, note 4), according to whom the Koran was composed in Neoarabic, rather than in Standard Arabic. Nöldeke (1904:1-14; 1910:1-5), Brockelmann (1908-13:I,460), *inter alia*, have clearly proved that, on the one hand, the consonantal skeleton of the Koran demonstrates the existence of ²*ʿarāb* and on the other hand, the existence of deviations demonstrates that the holy consonantal text has not been tampered with. Accordingly, in the following, I shall deal with two theories only: (a) that which assumes that the spoken language of Mecca was typologically different from the Standard Arabic in which the Koran is written, so that the language situation in pre-Islamic Mecca is already characterized by diglossia: literary Old Arabic as against spoken Neoarabic, and (b) that which claims that the vernacular of Mecca, as well as its literary language, belonged to the Old Arabic language type.

5.1. Muḥammad's Language was Old Arabic

We have already stressed (3.5) that, in our opinion, it is inconceivable that authors who spoke Neoarabic and had no grammar of Standard Arabic at their disposal, should have been able to compose Standard Arabic poetry devoid of Neoarabic or pseudo-correct elements. In the main, one may repeat this claim as to the Koran as well, although the difficulty of composing Standard Arabic prose was, naturally, less unsurmountable than that of producing Standard Arabic poetry. The total lack of Neoarabic and pseudo-correct features in the Koran establishes a linguistic situation in which the differences between the literary and the spoken language could not have been too far-reaching. This is, admittedly, an *argumentum ex silentio*. Yet had not the vernacular of Mecca before the Islam still exhibited Old Arabic linguistic structure, the Koran would have bristled with deviations from Standard Arabic, such as those in fact committed by a certain type of reader (see Beck (1946:190-91)). As already stated, I do not accept that the Koran had been revised to conform to Standard Arabic. The consonantal text of the Koran became sacred very quickly, as illustrated by the need to add the diacritic symbol *hamza*, rather than alter the holy text, as well as by certain deviations from ordinary Standard Arabic.⁶⁹ One must not adduce the existence of pausal forms as a proof for the pre-Islamic emergence of the Neoarabic language type.⁷⁰ The pausal forms, though admittedly foreshadowing the Neoarabic language type, are PART of the Old Arabic language system, even though limited to a special position.⁷¹ Their existence, to be sure, was one of the reasons for the formation of Neoarabic yet to come.⁷² This, however, is a historical problem; synchronically, the system of the pausal forms was part of the system of Standard Arabic,⁷³ and one must not confuse diachronic and synchronic analysis.

5.2. The Koran Reveals the Language of Mecca

Since, as stated, the text of the Koran had not been linguistically revised, it reveals some particulars of the language of Mecca, such as the shortening of final *ī*.⁷⁴ It stands to reason that this shortening of long *ī* was preceded, or, at least, accompanied, by the omission of short final *ī*.⁷⁵ Since we know that generally in Arabic dialects final *-a* was

⁶⁹See Nöldeke (1910:4-5), and cf. *infra*, 5.2.

⁷⁰As did, for example, W. Fischer (1967:58-59), who (see *supra*, note 62) even denied the pausal character of these forms. Cf. also A. Fischer (1905:816) who claimed that the spelling of the Koran is that of a "vernacular dialect."

⁷¹Cf. also note 62, end. ⁷²Cf. 3.4. ⁷³For particulars see Birkeland (1940).

⁷⁴See Nöldeke (1910:4). ⁷⁵See Birkeland (1940:20-21) without agreeing with all his arguments.

longer preserved than final *-i/-u*,⁷⁶ we can, with reasonable certainty, reconstruct the chronology of the omission of the final short vowels in the dialect of Mecca: first *i*, then *u*, finally *a*.⁷⁷

6. NO DIGLOSSIA EXISTED PRIOR TO ISLAM

As I have repeatedly stressed (v. §§3.5; 5.1), I cannot agree with the often expressed opinion⁷⁸ that Arabic diglossia rose before Islam. I consider it proven that the pre-Islamic poets, as well as Muhammad, spoke dialects which belonged to the Old Arabic linguistic type and did not differ too much from the literary language used by them. The almost total lack of deviations in the direction of Neoarabic, as well as of pseudo-corrections, so amply reflected in later texts, has to be interpreted as a clear proof (though, admittedly, an *argumentum ex silentio*) that, at least among the tribes who partook in the literary culture of the *ʿarabiyya*, no diglossia existed before Islam. The differences between spoken and literary language did not exceed the usual measure. Standard Arabic, to be sure, was, as far back as tradition goes,⁷⁹ i.e. in the late sixth century, a super-tribal language. Yet the various spoken languages, from which it was fed, were quite closely related to it.

6.1. Diglossia Emerged as a Result of the Great Arab Conquests

The decisive change occurred during the great Arab conquests of the seventh century. The deeply penetrating changes in social conditions, including close contact with the subjugated population, were the external cause for the emergence of the Neoarabic linguistic type, the pre-existence of pausal forms, and other features,⁸⁰ foreshadowing the Neoarabic linguistic structure, the internal ones.

6.2. Neoarabic as Attested by Christian Arabic and the Papyri

The emergence of the Neoarabic language type is clearly attested by a plethora of DATED Christian texts mainly from South Palestine, copied in the second half of the ninth century. These texts were written in Substandard Middle Arabic, in which Standard Arabic, Neoarabic and pseudo-correct elements freely interchange. They distinctly reflect almost all the

⁷⁶See Blau (1965:168-69). In many dialects, called by Cantineau "différentiel" (see Blanc (1970:116)), *a* in open unstressed syllables is more stable than *i, u*.

⁷⁷Birkeland's assumption (1940:105) that in GENERAL *i* disappeared before *u*, is unproved.

⁷⁸See Vollers (1906); Kahle, quoted *apud* Fück (1950:3, note 4); A. Fischer (1905:816); Spitaler (1953:144ff.); Wehr (1952:180ff.); W. Fischer (1967:53ff.); Corriente (see note 27). For the opposite view, see its classical formulation by Nöldeke (1904:1-14; 1910:1-4). Cf. also Fück (1950:1-3), against whose argument that the word order in the Koran proves its synthetic character see Spitaler (1953:144ff.), Wehr (1952:180ff.), Blau (1965). Cf. Blau (1968:9-12); Blau (1969).

⁷⁹We are here not concerned with the thorny problem as to whether Standard Arabic emerged as the language of a particular tribe or was from the beginning a supertribal tongue.

⁸⁰As the weakening and loss of the glottal stop in Hijâz; the tendency of the supersession of the *casus rectus* of the sound masculine plural by the *casus obliquus* in Mecca (see Nöldeke (1910:4)); and perhaps the expiratory stress of the Eastern dialects, if Rabin's theory (1951:102) proves right.

features⁸¹ characteristic of Neoarabic,⁸² including small morphological and lexical items,⁸³ which demonstrate that the spoken language of the authors (and copyists) of these texts was already plain Neoarabic, structurally and even in many details identical with the linguistic type exhibited by modern Arabic dialects. The existence of plain Neoarabic may, however, easily be demonstrated even a century earlier, i.e. from the second half of the eighth century.⁸⁴ B. Violet seems justified in ascribing to the end of the eighth century a bilingual Greek-Arabic psalm fragment found in the Umayyad Mosque of Damascus. Moreover, as demonstrated by H. Zayyât, Ms. British Museum or. 5091 (copied in 1172) contains a portion translated into Arabic as early as 772.

Whereas Christian Arabic texts, written in Substandard Middle Arabic, fully establish the existence of Neoarabic for the second part of the eighth century, it may with great probability be surmised already for the beginning of the second Islamic century (sometimes as early as 87 of the hejira) from early papyri, generally containing official documents written after the introduction of Arabic into public administration. These papyri are generally written in Standard Arabic with only a slight Neoarabic admixture. Nevertheless, the few deviations contained in them suffice to establish that the main features of Neoarabic were already evident at the beginning of the second Islamic century⁸⁵. There are some indications that short vowels in open syllables were liable to be omitted;⁸⁶ that *ḍ* and *ẓ* had merged;⁸⁷ that the system of cases had broken down;⁸⁸ that the system of the numerals had completely changed;⁸⁹ and that asyndetic object clauses had, to some extent, superseded syndetic ones.⁹⁰

Accordingly, the existence of the Neoarabic language type may be taken as proven for the beginning of the second Islamic century. And since we think to have invalidated the claim that Neoarabic had existed already prior to Islam, it stands to reason that the great Arab conquests served as catalyst to change Old Arabic dialects into Neoarabic ones.

6.3. Urban Versus Bedouin Dialects

It stands to reason that the Neoarabic language type first emerged in the TOWNS of the new Arab empire. This is indicated for both general and specific reasons. It was in the towns,⁹¹ even in those which developed from Arab military camps, that the Arabs had changed their social structure and the contact with the native population was most intimate. Moreover, Christian Arabic South-Palestinian texts from the first millennium exhibit some features characteristic of sedentary dialects.⁹² Many of these features, to be sure, are somewhat blurred and marginal, and, therefore, do not fully prove the sedentary character of these texts themselves.⁹³ Yet one of the most characteristic traits of texts written in Substandard Middle Arabic in general and of Ancient South-Palestinian Christian Arabic in particular is

⁸¹Or perhaps, one should rather plainly state "all the features." ⁸²See Blau (1966-67).

⁸³Cf. *ʔitnaʕshar* 'twelve', used regardless of case and gender (see Blau (1966-67:239-40)) or *min kull budd* 'necessarily' (see Blau (1966-67:313, §207)).

⁸⁴For particulars see Blau (1965:4-6). ⁸⁵See Blau (1965:4 and esp. 123ff.).

⁸⁶See Blau (1965:124). ⁸⁷See Blau (1965:126). ⁸⁸See Blau (1965:126-28).

⁸⁹See Blau (1965:131). ⁹⁰See Blau (1965:132). ⁹¹Cf. the data adduced by Fück (1950:7ff.).

⁹²For these features see Cantineau (1939).

⁹³Thus it is difficult to establish clearly the shift of interdental stops to stops; see Blau (1966-67:106, §12.4; 107-08, §15.2; 113, §20.1). The use of the *b*-imperfect is quite marginal; see *ibid.*, 149, §45.

the suppression by the masculine of the feminine plural of the pronoun, the verb and sometimes even of the participle and the adjective.⁹⁴ This feature, taken together with the other, somewhat less clear, indications,⁹⁵ suffices for establishing the sedentary character of ancient Neoarabic underlying the South-Palestinian Christian texts from the first millennium.

On the other hand, it stands to reason that, in contrast to the Neoarabic urban dialects, the Bedouin dialects in the first Islamic centuries preserved their main features unchanged,⁹⁶ so that the linguistic situation after the conquests was characterized by a dichotomy between Old Arabic Bedouin dialects and Neoarabic urban vernaculars. It is this dichotomy that is reflected in the stories, often apocryphal, depicting the Bedouin as the true representative of authentic Arabic. The Bedouin dialects, typologically close to Standard Arabic, and, *inter alia*, preserving the *ʿiṣṣāb*, the most conspicuous outer sign of Standard Arabic, appeared, in contrast to the Neoarabic urban vernaculars, as some variety of Standard Arabic. On this background the emergence of stories extolling the linguistic faculties of the Bedouin becomes quite comprehensible. Moreover, the Bedouin's conditions of life had not changed, and continued, as before Islam, to constitute the natural background for Bedouin poetry extolling the ideals of the Bedouin society. Therefore and because they spoke dialects structurally closely related to Standard Arabic, the tradition of Standard Arabic poetry continued among the Bedouin tribes for quite a long time. Wehr (1952:183), who attributed the emergence of the Neoarabic language type to the pre-Islamic period, from his point of view justly considered the long continuity of the tradition of the poetic language among the Bedouin to be astonishing. And one may add,⁹⁷ that one does not understand how Bedouin poets, allegedly speaking Neoarabic dialects and not fostering the science of grammar, could master Standard Arabic poetry. Moreover, we have the express statements of the Arab philologists that they collected the data for genuine Standard Arabic among the Bedouin. Wehr (1952:183-84) and Spitaler (1953:145-46) suggest that the Bedouin, when interrogated by philologists, quite naturally answered in artificial Standard Arabic, in which the philologists were interested. This suggestion, however, does not account for the great variety of traditions as to the most correct tribal language and the dialectal differences. In my opinion, the only assumption accounting for all the data available is that Bedouin tribes, even in the post-Islamic period, continued speaking Old Arabic dialects.

6.4. The Diversity of Bedouin Dialects

The basic dichotomy of Arabic dialects in the first Islamic centuries between Old Arabic Bedouin dialects⁹⁸ and Neoarabic sedentary vernaculars, however, must not induce us to ignore further complications of the set-up. Not only did the Bedouin dialects differ from Standard Arabic despite their similar structure, but there existed also an immense variety of Bedouin dialects. In any attempt to reconstruct their linguistic development, factors favoring divergent development, for lack of any dominant linguistic center, must be taken

⁹⁴See Blau (1966-67:206, §105) (cf. the literature adduced *ibid.*, note 41); cf. also *supra* §2, note 12.

⁹⁵Cf. note 93

⁹⁶For the following see Blau (1965:8ff.), where the whole complex of problems is extensively treated; cf. also Blau (1963).

⁹⁷That Bedouin dialects became later only Neoarabic, is also demonstrated by their preserving the *tanwīn* till our very days (though, of course, in a function quite different from that of Old Arabic), see Blau (1965:167ff.).

⁹⁸See *supra* 3.5; 5.1; 6.

into consideration. There was, no doubt, some general levelling of the Bedouin dialects in the military camps, but this was, it seems, only temporary. In the long run, new Bedouin dialects arose everywhere, the determining factor being the influence of whichever group happened, in each given case, to predominate among the mixture of Old Arabic dialects. These theoretical considerations are corroborated by contemporary sources,⁹⁹ according to which in every province the dialect of the tribe which settled in it prevailed.

Therefore, we cannot accept Fück's (1950:4) contention that in the military camps a common Bedouin language arose, which constituted the basis of Islamic early Standard Arabic.¹⁰⁰ Despite the ingenuity of this theory, it seems to us to contradict both the general trend of linguistic development, lacking any dominant linguistic center, and the express statement of the sources.

6.5. The Unifying Forces

Similar was the development of the Neoarabic sedentary dialects. Here too, for the lack of a dominant linguistic center, one has to allow for differentiating factors. The determining circumstances were not only the influence of whichever group happened to predominate among the mixtures of the sedentary dialects, but also the degree of foreign influence and the character of the native population.

On the other hand, one must not lose sight of unifying forces influencing the linguistic set-up. Not only had Standard Arabic, as a language of prestige, some influence in bringing the various dialects nearer together, as well as perhaps some kind of military *koine* used in the military expeditions,¹⁰¹ but the actual basis of the dialects, the different mixtures of Old Arabic idioms, from which also the Neoarabic vernaculars originated, were not highly differentiated. In spite of their differences, the Old Arabic dialects were of the same linguistic type and, in all probability, as a rule mutually intelligible. Therefore, it is likely that they did not differ too much from the very beginning and that they provided a not too heterogeneous basis for both Bedouin and Neoarabic dialects. These latter were, it is true, decisively influenced by the indigenous population among whom they arose, so that, apparently, the Neoarabic sedentary dialects were more diversified than the Bedouin idioms. Yet even the Neoarabic vernaculars had, from the beginning, much in common, owing to their common stratum of Old Arabic dialects.

Another important unifying factor was the general "drift" or the convergent lines of development.¹⁰² One should not underestimate the effect of those features that can plausibly be interpreted as a natural development (often the continuation of earlier trends), basically independent of mutual influence and not due to common heritage. In many of the changes that have affected the Neoarabic dialects, Neoarabic tallies with Hebrew and Aramaic as against Old Arabic, thus repeating the development by which these Old Semitic languages had been transformed many hundreds of years before. The fact that the Neoarabic dialects were affected by the same changes as other Semitic languages in prehistoric periods, clearly indicates the existence of general tendencies that transformed different Semitic languages independently.

⁹⁹See the literature adduced Blau (1965:11, note 2).

¹⁰⁰For the possible reason underlying this theory see Blau (1965:10, note 3).

¹⁰¹It was this military *koine* which was misrepresented by Fück as if it were a veritable common Bedouin language, which constituted the basis of later Standard Arabic; see 6.4.

¹⁰²Besides Blau (1965:12), cf. also Blau (1969b).

Another factor making for unity was the mutual contact between the dialects. The interrelation of the various Arabic dialects was rather involved. Not only was contact established between the various Neoarabic dialects on the one hand and between the different Bedouin vernaculars on the other, but also linguistic changes were spreading from Bedouin speech to Neoarabic vernaculars and vice versa. Sometimes one dialect decisively influenced another. In other cases, isolated features spread from one dialect center over a vast dialect area.¹⁰³ Therefore, when investigating a feature common to many dialects, one has also to take into consideration that it originated in one of them and then spread to the others.

Thus, in view of the common basic stratum of the Old Arabic dialects, the general drift and the mutual contact, it is no wonder that, despite strong centrifugal forces, the modern dialects are not too much differentiated and evince quite a homogeneous character. Due to their common features, we may even speak of an Arabic *koine*, but we must bear in mind that this term applies only to the result of their linguistic development, but not to the starting point of the development. Despite the common basic stratum of Old Arabic there existed in the beginning no Arabic *koine*, from which, as alleged by Ferguson (1959) in his famous article on the Arabic *koine*,¹⁰⁴ the modern Arabic dialects are descended. It emerged only as the consequence of a long and intricate process, involving the above-mentioned unifying factors. This process is the only way to account for the *prima facie* astonishing fact that Arabic dialects, though LACKING A SINGLE CENTER OF LINGUISTIC PRESTIGE, nevertheless have a distinctly homogeneous character. Any explanation which derives these dialects from one more or less homogeneous language, i.e. the so-called *koine*, does not take into account the basic factor in Arabic linguistic development: the complete lack of any outstanding linguistic center. Ferguson (1959:619) himself suggests that his *koine* came into existence through a complex process of mutual borrowing and leveling among various dialects and not as a result of diffusion from a single source, since he is well aware that the history of the Arabic speaking world shows no evidence of long-continued linguistic predominance of a single center of prestige and communication. Nevertheless, he thinks that the modern sedentary dialects have to be derived from an old *koine*. I, however, think, as stated, that the *koine* emerged at the end of the development, rather than at its beginning. My interpretation of the facts also tallies with modern linguistic conception as reflected in the wave-theory. Wave-theory, as distinct from the family-tree theory, does not regard the dividing process that affects an allegedly homogeneous language as the only impelling power from which new idioms originate. According to this theory, resemblances between two languages may exist not only because of their common origin, but also because of linguistic changes, which spread like waves over a speech-area. In this manner, I do not think that their common origin alone accounts for the common features in the various dialects. Some of these features developed as a result of the spread of the linguistic changes, i.e. by contact between the dialects, while others are due to parallel developments, the general drift. Accordingly, the *koine*, in my opinion, is not the forerunner of the linguistic process, with the various dialects splitting off from a more or less uniform speech (i.e. an old *koine*), but the *koine* itself emerged only as the consequence of the linguistic development.

¹⁰³For examples see Blau (1965:14), where, however, one should also allow for a Maghrebine component in the speech of the autochthonous Egyptian Jewry--cf. Blanc (1974:212-15).

¹⁰⁴The repercussions of Ferguson's stimulating paper are reflected by the unusually great number of articles dealing with problems raised by his paper. Studies treating the general problem raised by Ferguson (sometimes also analysing smaller items contained in his paper) are Blau (1960-61:133-35); Blau (1965:12-17) (on which, in the main, the presentation of the problem of the *koine* in this paper is based); Blau (1969b:39-44); Cohen (1962). For papers dealing with special items of Ferguson's study see *infra* 6.6.

6.6. Ferguson's Arguments in Favor of a Koine

Ferguson (1959) adduces fourteen features, in support of the existence of an old *koiné*, which, in his opinion, cannot be interpreted as due to the general drift. In the following, I shall briefly analyse these features:

6.6.1. The Loss of the Dual

The loss of the dual is, even according to Ferguson (1959:620), part of the general drift. Two striking elements of agreement in the field of the dual, however, are regarded by Ferguson as a proof for the *koiné*:

6.6.1.1. The Disappearance of the Dual Forms in Adjectives, Pronouns, and Verbs

One will hardly agree with this view.¹⁰⁵ Not only is the disappearance of the dual in these parts of speech well attested in other Semitic languages, thus exhibiting the existence of a general drift, but the reason for it can easily be seen. In these categories the use of the dual is, almost invariably, due to concord only, without communicating anything new. Accordingly, it was especially likely to fall into desuetude. Similarly, in Ancient South Palestinian Christian Arabic substantives used as predicates tend to stand in the plural, rather than in the dual,¹⁰⁶ and in modern dialects, in references to substantives in this position as well as in other repeated references to the same two items, typically the dual is not repeated, since this would be tantamount to a repetition of the numeral 'two' each time. Instead, the plural is used.¹⁰⁷ All these cases exhibit the tendency of restricting the dual to those cases in which it has communicative value.

6.6.1.2. The Plural Concord of Dual Nouns

Ferguson claimed that another feature in the field of the dual points to the existence of the *koiné*. Whereas plural nouns take feminine singular concord (type *biyût kibîra* 'big houses'), dual nouns take plural concord (type *bitên kubâr* 'two big houses'). Yet¹⁰⁸ not only is this statement somewhat oversimplified, since dialects reflect differences as to concord, but the plural concord of dual nouns, at least in some dialects, is to be viewed as closely akin to plural concord in what Blanc dubs "enumerative constructions" (including expressions of the type *kâm bêt* 'a few houses'; *bêtî wbêtak* 'your house and mine'; *talat biyût* 'three houses'). "The dual is a stable combination of the numeral 'two' plus a noun, and such it is akin to expressions meaning 'a few', 'several', 'one or two', and sequences connected by 'and'. It is also closely akin to numeral+noun constructions. In the latter, plural concord is not as stable as in the dual, a fact which may be connected with the portmanteau nature of the dual as against the looser combinations of free numerals plus nouns."¹⁰⁹

6.6.2. *a* > *i* in Inflectional Suffixes

A number of inflectional affixes which contain *a* in Standard Arabic, have in modern dialects the reflexes of *i* instead of those of *a*, whenever the dialect in question has retained the

¹⁰⁵See Blau (1960-61:133). Cf. also *supra* 2, note 11.

¹⁰⁶See Blau (1966-67:213, note 67). ¹⁰⁷See Blanc (1970b:44, §1.2).

¹⁰⁸The following is based on Blanc's (1970b:49-55) ingenious observation.

¹⁰⁹See Blanc (1970b:53, §5.33).

a-i contrast. Yet, as to the subject prefixes of the imperfect, one of the affixes adduced by Ferguson, Ferguson's theory is based on the assumption that the *i*-imperfect is secondary. As a matter of fact, however, it existed side by side with *a*-imperfect (see Bloch (1967)), the forms being distributed according to Barth's Law, and the dialectal *i*-imperfect is the result of generalization. As to the other inflectional affixes, the shift of *a* to *i* in them was, it seems, the result of a rather intricate process due to both parallel development and mutual contact. The intricacy of this process may easily be seen, for example, in Grotzfeld's (1964:28-31) attempts to explain the behaviour of original *a* in the dialect of Damascus in both affixes and in medial position historically. Without agreeing with his explanations in every instance or considering his attempts to be comprehensive, one is struck by both the complexity of this feature and the differences between various dialects.

6.6.3. The Loss of Final-*w* Verbs

This has to be attributed to the drift, rather than to the alleged *koine*. Not only have these verbs disappeared in other Semitic languages (Hebrew, Aramaic) as a class, but in Standard Arabic itself they have survived only in the first verbal theme type *qatala* and *qatula*, whereas in the type *qatila*, as well as in all the other verbal themes, they had become final-*y* verbs. If we derive the modern dialects from Old Arabic dialects exhibiting a similar restriction of final-*w* verbs, the complete disappearance of final-*w* verbs in modern dialects becomes easily understood.¹¹⁰

6.6.4. The Reorganization of Geminate Verbs (type *ḥallêṭ* 'I untied' as against Standard Arabic *ḥalaltu*)

Neither should this be simply derived from a putative *koine*. In Ancient South Palestinian Christian Arabic¹¹¹ these verbs were treated like medial weak, rather than final weak, verbs (type *ḥalt*) before suffixes beginning with consonants. The earliest instance of geminate verbs treated like final-*y* verbs (type *ḥallêṭ*) in early Christian Arabic I have so far come across, is from 1298 A.D.¹¹² Accordingly, for early Christian Arabic at least, one has to assume that the reorganization of geminate verbs was due to dialect contact, rather than to the alleged *koine*.

6.6.5. Cliticized -*l*-

-*l*- 'to, for' with pronominal suffix is directly added to verbs. One will allow for both a general drift (cf. this feature in Ethiopian languages, see Brockelmann (1908-13:II.321)) and contact between the dialects, since this feature is attested in Bedouin dialects as well (see 6.7).

6.6.6. Numerals

Ferguson adduces several features in the cardinal numerals 3-10 as stemming from the alleged *koine*:

¹¹⁰See Blau (1960-61:134). Cohen's (1962:134) assumption that since the opposition between singular and plural was neutralized in forms like *yaghzû*, final-*w* verbs passed into final-*y*, may be considered as an additional, but rather marginal, reason.

¹¹¹See Blau (1966-67:167-68, §71). ¹¹²See Blau (1966-67:167 note 124).

6.6.6.1. Long Numerals: Independent; Short Numerals: Dependent Forms

There is a general tendency in modern dialects to utilize long forms (with -a/e-ending) as independent forms occurring in final position in phrases, and short forms (with zero ending) as dependent forms, preceding the counted noun. Yet not only is this feature not as widespread as one would expect if it really stemmed from the *koine*,¹¹³ but Bloch (1971) has ably demonstrated that this feature stems from the general tendency, surely part of the general drift, not to use monosyllabic forms as independent forms. Since the majority of the short forms are monosyllabic, they were limited to the dependent position.

6.6.6.2. *t*-Replacing a Glottal Stop

In many modern dialects there is a handful of highly frequent masculine nouns with plurals beginning with a glottal stop which are replaced by a *t*- when one of the numerals 3-10 precedes. Yet this feature does not demonstrate the existence of the alleged *koine*. First, as Ferguson himself admits, this feature is not common to all dialects. Moreover, one has to take into account that, in ordinary language, the most usual plural nouns beginning with a glottal stop (> zero) are masculine nouns (as *ʔayyām* 'days', *ʔashhur* 'months', *ʔālāf* 'thousands'), whereas those with consonantal beginning are feminine (*sinīn* 'years', *layālī* 'nights', *miyya* 'hundred').¹¹⁴ Thus, the *t*-forms of the numeral, which, in Old Arabic, refer to masculine nouns, have persisted before the frequent masculine nouns which begin with a glottal stop (> zero), whereas the analogy of feminine nouns beginning with consonants, which, in Old Arabic, were referred to by the short forms of the cardinal numerals 3-10, might have influenced the use of the short forms preceding nouns beginning with consonants in general.

6.6.7. *ṭ* in the Numerals 13-19 (type *xamṣṭaʿsh* 'fifteen')

This is, it seems due not only to the influence of the *ʿ*, but even more to that of the *ḥ* (*xamṣṭaʿsh* > *xamsata ʿashaRa*), which very often induces *muḥaxxam* (emphatic) pronunciation.¹¹⁵ Accordingly, it could well have arisen independently in different dialects. In fact, it is not as general as one would believe according to Ferguson's wording. Thus Bauer (1926:80, note 1) expressly states it for rural Palestinian dialects only, in contradistinction to the urban vernaculars.

6.6.8. The Loss of the Feminine Elative

The loss of the feminine elative,¹¹⁶ type *ʔalkubrâ* 'the largest one', as against the preservation of the feminine of ordinal numbers, type *xâmisa(t)* 'fifth' (of limited occurrence in late Standard Arabic) and of the feminine of "color" words, type *ḥamrâ(ʔ)* 'red' (formed through a special morphological process), in Ferguson's opinion further proves the existence of the *koine*. This line of argument, however, overlooks the decisive fact that the feminine elative in Standard Arabic exhibits both special formation AND very limited occurrence (it is limited to superlative construction of the type *ʔalghurḥatu -lkubrâ* 'the largest room'). Therefore, it was bound to be eliminated independently in the various dialects, which presumably inherited the limited occurrence of this special formation from Old Arabic. On the

¹¹³See Brockelmann (1908-13:II,275), Bloch (1971:53, note 3), Cohen (1962:138).

¹¹⁴Thus, for instance, in Socin (1900-01) almost ALL the numerals occurring refer to the nouns cited!

¹¹⁵Cf. Blau (1965:77; 126, note 2).

¹¹⁶Ferguson erroneously speaks of comparative; cf. *infra*.

contrary, the feminine of ordinal numbers, although limited in use, exhibits normal formation and, therefore, is much more stable than the feminine relative. This applies also to the feminine of "color" adjectives, which although exhibiting special formation, was not limited in use.

6.6.9. The Adjective Plural $\text{fu}^{\text{c}}\text{âl}$

As to the adjective plural $\text{fu}^{\text{c}}\text{âl}$, as against Old Arabic $\text{fi}^{\text{c}}\text{âl}$, I am inclined to derive it from the frequent adjectives $\text{kibâr} > \text{kubâr}$ 'large';¹¹⁷ $\text{ṭiwâl} > \text{ṭuwâl}$ 'long', in which the medial labials easily explain the *ad hoc* shift $\text{i} > \text{u}$. This *u* was then, possibly, extended to their antonyms, to spread afterwards to the whole pattern.

6.6.10. The *nisba* Suffix $-\hat{\text{i}}$

Ferguson's assumption that the *nisba* suffix $-\hat{\text{i}}$ in the dialects, feminine $-\text{iyya}$, points in the direction of a *koine*, is not convincing.¹¹⁸ Both the masculine and feminine forms reflect the normal phonetic development of Standard Arabic $-\text{iyy}$ (in pause $-\hat{\text{i}}!$)¹¹⁹ $-\text{iyyat-}$ (in pause $-\text{iyyah}$). Modern Arabic feminine ttânye 'the second' must not be rederived from the masculine ʔaththânî/ttâni , but rather from Old Arabic ʔaththâniyat- , in pause ʔaththâniyah .

6.6.11-13. Lexical Features

Ferguson adduces three lexical features in support of his alleged *koine*: jâb 'to bring', shâḥ 'to see' and the relative ʔillî . As to the latter two items, Cohen (1962:139-41) has demonstrated that they are not common to all sedentary dialects. I am inclined to regard these three items as having spread due to intercommunication.¹²⁰ The dispersion of such lexical features is well illustrated by the Bedouin dialect of Marazig, where shâḥ has already penetrated the speech of men, whereas it is non-existent in the vernacular of the women, who, due to their social status, are less accessible to linguistic change.¹²¹

6.6.14. The loss of ḍâd

The disappearance of ḍâd is due to the general drift:¹²² this sound was completely isolated in the consonantal system of the *ʔarabiyya* and therefore tended to disappear.

6.7. Alleged Features of Sedentary *Koine* Occurring in Bedouin Dialects

The fallacy of the theory of a *koine* from which modern sedentary dialects are alleged to have stemmed is also borne out by an analysis of modern Bedouin dialects.¹²³ These frequently display features that are generally considered peculiar to sedentary vernaculars. Sometimes these features¹²⁴ fluctuate between what is presumably old Bedouin usage and a new one which corresponds to that of the sedentary dialects, thus revealing the imprint of the latter and/or convergent development. This process, affecting the Bedouin dialects and taking place to some extent before our eyes, cannot, of course, be attributed to splitting off from one common language, because the Bedouin dialects did not emerge together with the sedentary vernaculars, as admitted by Ferguson himself. It must, then, originate in other factors, namely in the drift and the mutual contact between the dialects. The existence of

¹¹⁷Cf. Cohen (1962:137). ¹¹⁸Cf. Cohen (1962:134-35). ¹¹⁹Cf. e.g. Birkeland (1940:67).

¹²⁰Cf. Blau (1965:14, note 2). ¹²¹See Boris (1958), s.v.

¹²²See Cohen (1962:135-37), Blau (1965:12). Cf. also *supra* note 3. ¹²³See Blau (1965:16-17).

¹²⁴For an attempt to compare one Bedouin dialect with the sedentary type see Blau (1965:17, note 2).

linguistic phenomena, peculiar to sedentary dialects and spreading to the Bedouin idioms, clearly exhibits the wide range of the drift and/or the contact between the various vernaculars. The converging forces, which had presumably influenced the sedentary dialects, also affected the Bedouin idioms, with the result that the linguistic structure of the latter approaches that of the sedentary vernaculars. Since Ferguson himself thinks that the alleged *koine* came into existence through a complex process of mutual borrowing and leveling among various sedentary dialects and since we see before our eyes the Bedouin dialects approaching the sedentary type through a similar process, it is reasonable to assume that just as the *koine* common to sedentary AND Bedouin dialects is the result of linguistic development, rather than the continuation of a language from which these dialects had split off, the sedentary *koine* too came into being as a result of linguistic development, rather than existed from the very beginning as the language from which the sedentary vernaculars derived.

7. SUMMARY

To sum up: I have attempted to demonstrate that Arabic diglossia arose as late as the first Islamic century in the towns of the Arabic empire, to a great extent as a result of the great changes that affected the Arabs as consequence of the great Arab conquests (6.3). I deny the emergence of the Neoarabic language type in the tribes that partook in the culture of Arabic poetry prior to Islam, since it is inconceivable for me that speakers of allegedly Neoarabic vernaculars should have been able, without the help of a codified grammar, to compose poetry in Old Arabic and disclose no signs of their putative Neoarabic mother tongue (3.5). For a similar, though admittedly somewhat less cogent, reason, I consider the spoken language of Mecca, looming in the background of the language of the Koran, to be of the Old Arabic type as well (5.1). On the other hand, in principle, there is no reason not to allow for the possibility of the emergence of the Neoarabic linguistic type before Islam with tribes that did not partake in the culture of Standard Arabic poetry (4). Nevertheless, in my opinion, no proof has been adduced that Nabatean Arabic MUST have been of Neoarabic type (4.2; 4.3). The redundancy of the Old Arabic case system must not be adduced as a proof for the emergence of the Neoarabic language type. Exceeding redundancy already characterizes the Old Semitic case system, and redundancy in general is an integral part of every language system (3.2). I even think that Bedouin dialects continued to exhibit Old Arabic language type in the first Islamic centuries, again because it is inconceivable that speakers of Neoarabic vernacular could have composed Standard Arabic poetry without falling back into their Neoarabic mother tongue (6.3). Accordingly, Arabic dialects in the first Islamic centuries are characterized by basic dichotomy between Old Arabic Bedouin dialects and Neoarabic sedentary vernaculars (6.3). Despite the basic structural similarity of the Bedouin dialects on the one hand, and the sedentary vernaculars on the other, there existed an immense variety of both types of dialects. Therefore, one must not speak of a common Bedouin language which allegedly arose in the military camps to constitute the basis of Islamic early Standard Arabic (6.4) nor of a *koine*, from which supposedly the modern Arabic sedentary dialects split off (6.5; 6.6; 6.7). In the long run, the centripetal forces, i.e. the general drift and the mutual contact, have prevailed, so that a *koine* of the sedentary dialects, which further exerts more and more influence on the Bedouin vernaculars, has emerged as part of the linguistic development still in progress.

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